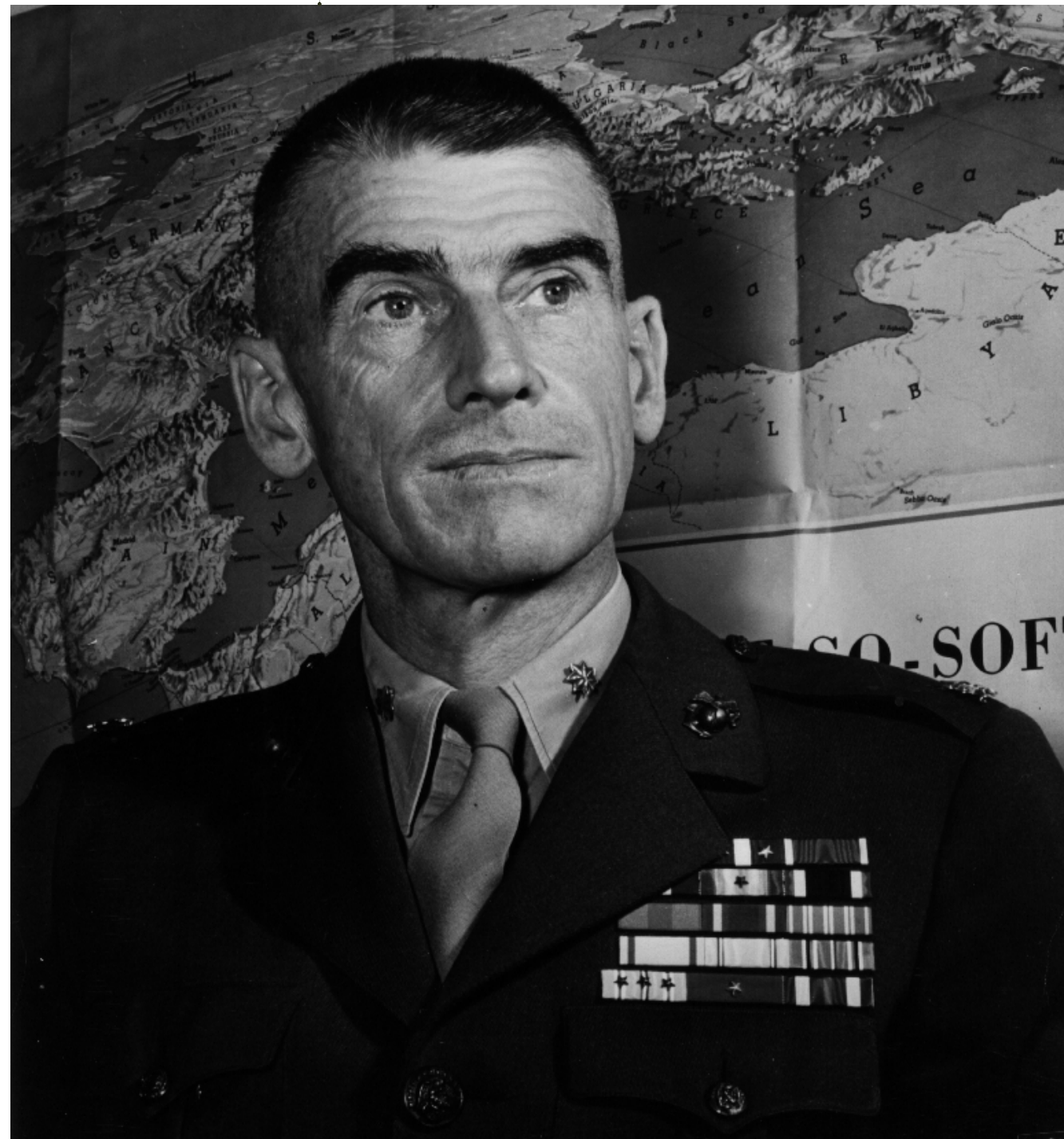


A Marine's Legacy

A FURMAN STUDENT WORKS DILIGENTLY TO SET THE RECORD STRAIGHT ABOUT HER LEGENDARY GRANDFATHER, EVANS CARLSON.

BY DEB RICHARDSON-MOORE



The most surreal moment of an often-surreal four years for Karen Carlson Loving came last August as she interviewed a wizened Red Army veteran high in the remote mountains of northwest China. The old man — 90 if he was a day — had been a Communist guerrilla fighter against Japanese invaders in 1937 and '38, and Loving's grandfather had been a U.S. Marine intelligence officer assigned to observe the war.

Through her interpreter, Loving thanked the elderly soldier, explaining, "There was so much my grandfather learned from you that helped when the time came for the Americans to fight the Japanese."

The Chinese man stared incredulously at his blonde Western visitor, possibly the first to his isolated village. "You mean those bastards attacked the Americans, too?" he asked.

Interviewing Chinese peasant-soldiers and U.S. Marines who do remember Pearl Harbor has been Loving's life for four years now. Her grandfather was Brig. Gen. Evans Fordyce Carlson — the much-decorated commander of Carlson's Raiders, who provided some of the United States' most dramatic victories in the Pacific Theater during World War II. Using unorthodox commando-style methods and introducing the Chinese philosophy of harmonious Gung Ho, the Raiders were the precursors of today's Navy Seals, Green Berets and other special forces. Their exploits were celebrated in a 1943 movie that starred Randolph Scott as the craggy-faced Carlson.

But Loving, 52 and a Furman senior, is out to do more than investigate her famous grandfather's military feats. She wants to explore his relationship with guerrilla leader Mao Zedong, his close-up look at the Chinese Communists during the early years of their revolution, and the change of life they wrought in him.

And she's looking to Furman to help her do it.

GROWING UP ON MILITARY BASES as the daughter of a Marine officer, Loving mainly knew her granddad as an entry in the encyclopedia — cool to show her friends, but hardly affecting her life.

That all changed four years ago when he visited her in her dreams.

"For two weeks I'd wake up at 2 in the morning, dreaming about my grandfather," says Loving, who, at the time, was a real estate agent in Virginia. "It was really weird because I didn't know him. He died before I was born. So it's not like he was this ever present thing in my mind, but I'd wake up and he'd be right there."

Exasperated, she got out of bed one night and typed his name into an Internet search engine. Along with the accolades were negative articles about this controversial officer who once resigned his commission to speak and write in support of the Chinese resistance. She also discovered that the U.S. Marine Corps Raider Association was holding its annual convention in Chicago.

She was nervous about going because four Raider battalions operated during World War II, and she knew tensions existed among them. But a warm reception from her grandfather's old Marines — and the realization that they were dying off — convinced her that she needed to move quickly if she wanted to set his story straight.

And setting his story straight — "the good, the bad and the ugly," as she puts it — soon became her goal.

Born in 1896, Evans Carlson served two tours of duty with the Marines in China before returning to Shanghai for a third tour in 1937. He was a language/intelligence officer whose mission was to observe the Chinese forces and feed information directly to President Franklin D. Roosevelt.

On the August day he arrived, Japan bombed Shanghai. As Chiang Kai-Shek's Nationalist Forces took heavy losses in the major cities, Carlson realized that the one group making progress was the 8th Route Army, the old Red Army, operating in the northern mountains.

He received permission to travel with the Communist guerrillas, watching how they worked with the people in the countryside to gain grassroots support against the Japanese. Mao Zedong, leader of the guerrillas, assigned five young escorts to Carlson, and for more than two years they traveled quickly



Women partisans, like these in Shanxi province in 1938, were part of the Chinese resistance; a young Mao Zedong in February 1938 in Yen'an, headquarters for the Chinese Communists. Both photographs are credited to Evans Carlson.

All photographs accompanying this article courtesy Karen Loving, except as noted.



and lightly, with the officers suffering the same harsh living conditions as their men.

After his tour, Carlson spoke to reporters, saying that the Communists were China's best hope against the Japanese and lambasting U.S. suppliers for sending scrap, oil and other materials to Japan. The Marines censured him, and he resigned.

He spent the next two years lecturing and writing two books, *The Chinese Army* and *Twin Stars of China*. Back in China as a civilian in 1940-41, he became convinced that Japan would attack the United States, according to a 1943 story in *Life* magazine. He flew to Manila to warn Gen. Douglas MacArthur and to lobby, unsuccessfully, for U.S. forces to establish a guerrilla base in the Philippines. Before Japan did attack, he rejoined the Marines.

In the aftermath of Pearl Harbor, Roosevelt decided that the United States needed elite forces like Winston Churchill's British commandos. He named Carlson commander of one of four all-volunteer Raider battalions. The assignment was Carlson's chance to put into action the lessons learned during his two years with the Chinese guerrillas.

The *Life* article and a recent History Channel special on the Raiders made much of Carlson's unorthodox leadership. Drawing on the Chinese concept of Gung Ho, which means "work in harmony," he abolished perks for officers and invited all the men under his command to make suggestions, register complaints and take part in operational strategy meetings. Raiders learned to live on rice, raisins, tea, chocolate, bacon and minimal water, cooking in their helmets to avoid setting up field kitchens. They could wear un-Marine-like long hair and beards as long as they learned to think fast and fight lethally with knives and bayonets.

In August 1942, with America reeling from a string of Allied defeats, 222 of Carlson's Raiders rode in the bellies of two submarines to Makin Island in the Pacific. They attacked in the pre-dawn hours, destroying radio stations and supply depots and killing more than 350 Japanese soldiers.

Eighteen Raiders were killed, and Carlson paid a native to bury them. Only when the submarines got back to Hawaii did the Raiders, who had traveled under radio silence, realize another 12 men were missing.

Despite the heavy losses, Marine brass were so pleased with



Left: Carlson's Communist guerrilla escorts on his last trip across Northern China were, from left, Ouyang Shanzen, Liu Baiyu, Kang, Lin San and Wang Yang. Middle: Japanese prisoners of war captured by the guerrillas, 1938 (photo by Carlson). Bottom: The dig at Makin Island, where the bodies of 19 Raiders were recovered 58 years after the raid on Makin.

the success of the mission that they eventually ordered Carlson to serve as technical advisor on a movie about the Makin assault called "Gung Ho," released in 1943 as a means of boosting public morale.

"Nobody understood at that time, I think, just how hungry the American public was for some good war news," retired Marine Lt. Col. Howard Stidham, a former Raider, told the History Channel.

Carlson's next major campaign was a 31-day ambushing march through the jungles of Guadalcanal known as the "The Long Patrol." It won Carlson his third Navy Cross.

All four Raider battalions were disbanded late in the war, with the men folded into other units. Carlson was subsequently injured in Saipan, when he tried to pull a wounded radioman to safety. Carlson's wound never healed completely, and he died of a heart attack in 1947 — four years before his son and fellow Marine Raider, Evans C. Carlson, gave him a granddaughter.



MEETING THE SURVIVING CARLSON'S RAIDERS in 2000 upset the life Karen Loving had planned.

She had married during her second year of college in Virginia and put her education on hold while raising three sons and pursuing a 25-year career in real estate. She and her husband, John, a high school teacher and coach, thought they might relocate so that she could finish school — some day.

But history was breaking over her like a Waikiki wave as she met her grandfather's men. Just months earlier, the Civilian Identification Lab Hawaii had discovered the remains of 19 soldiers on Makin Island — 58 years after Carlson had paid a native to bury them. He had counted 18 dead, but another drowned soldier — one of the missing 12 — probably washed ashore and was buried there as well, Loving says.

The bodies had just arrived in Hawaii, and Loving and her new Raider friends began lobbying to have them buried at Arlington National Cemetery. The men changed their Raider Association constitution to allow Loving to serve on their board — the first non-Raider and the first woman. Together, they succeeded in getting permission for 13 of the bodies to be buried in Arlington on the anniversary of the Makin raid — August 17, 2001. Families of the other six wanted them buried in their local communities, where the Raiders had long been heroes.

The photos of Carlson at right and opposite right were taken by Robert Capa, the celebrated war photographer, at Taierchwang in April of 1938. This page, bottom: Members of the Second Raiders Battalion proudly display their catch — accomplished by throwing dynamite into a Guadalcanal lagoon and harvesting the results (photo by Carlson). Opposite, bottom: Raiders on patrol in the alligator-infested Tenaru River at Guadalcanal.



Meanwhile, Loving began looking more closely at her grandfather's voluminous cache of diaries and correspondence, which were zealously guarded by her father. It was no wonder: The papers had been lost to the family for years after the senior Carlson's third wife refused to relinquish them, Loving says. They resurfaced in 1960, when Loving's father, who now lives in Columbia, S.C., got a call from an old Marine Corps friend who spotted the general's letters, medals, diaries and Gung Ho knife in the window of a military memorabilia shop in Seattle, Wash.

"These Marine buddies of his took the shopkeeper around the block a few times and had a heart-to-heart with him about doing the right thing," Loving says with a laugh. "So this man sold all my grandfather's things back to my father for \$500."

The papers were astonishing. Interviews with Mao Zedong. Diaries telling of a 1,000-mile march through the mountains of northern China. A letter from Carlson to his father, in which the Marine said he felt he'd been put on Earth to help the Chinese people in their struggle for freedom.

"When I read that letter," says Loving, "I realized that if I wanted to understand my grandfather, I needed to understand his relationship to the people in China, what had happened to him in China that had so transformed him."

"We all have these pivotal moments in our lives and that was one of those moments for him, and I guess for me, once I read it."

WHAT SHE WANTED TO DO, she realized, was to write a scholarly history that would explore Carlson's unique position as an American military officer at a crucial time in Chinese history. But she needed to know a lot more about that history.

"I didn't have the tools I needed to do what I wanted to do," she says. "I really did need to get back to school."

She checked out schools in North Carolina, but it wasn't until she approached Furman — where her middle son, Gabriel, had graduated in 1996 — that she found exactly the right match. For one thing, Gabriel's experience had been wonderful, she says. "Not only had he come out of Furman a better educated person," she told *The Paladin*, "he came out a better man."

And after an exploratory meeting with retired Furman history professor Ed Jones and current faculty members Kate Kaup in political science and Jan Kiely in history, she realized



that, even as an undergraduate, she would be able to work with professors well versed in Chinese history.

"It was like walking into a room and all the lights were on," Loving says. "They were so excited about what I was doing. They recognized right away the significance of the work."

Says Kiely, "Anybody who studies Chinese history knows Carlson. He was really kind of a prophet at that time for American foreign policy. He was saying, 'Here's this enormous Communist movement out here, and they're fighting hard against the Japanese.' Not a lot of people listened to him, but FDR did."

Carlson was also an enthusiastic photographer, and Kiely calls Loving's inherited collection "historically amazing. I mean, they're like anyone's photographs of their grandparents, except her grandfather is standing next to Mao Zedong and Zhou En-lai when they're in their 40s in guerrilla base camps."

Ironically, the very richness of the material, in a sense, prevents Loving from methodically filling her educational toolbox before starting her grandfather's biography. Both the Raiders and the Communists Carlson befriended during the 1930s are dying at an alarming rate.

"Time is the great enemy here," she says. "That's why I feel as if I'm running off half-cocked. But I'm doing everything I can to get these interviews to the best of my ability and get everything recorded, and hope that in the future, I'll have the knowledge and tools I need to really do this subject justice."

INTERVIEWING 50 SURVIVING RAIDERS was the easy part. The real challenge was traveling to China, where her grandfather was declared an official Friend of China on February 26, 1996, the 100th anniversary of his birth.

Loving and her husband made their first trip in 2002, the summer before she arrived at Furman.

"Off to China we went, which was pretty scary," she recalls. "You know, we were both duck-and-cover Cold War babies. And growing up in the military — my father was very nervous that I was heading to a Communist country."

Armed with contacts provided by the Chinese ambassador to the United States and the Friendship Association of the People's Republic of China, the Lovings traveled to Yen'an, where Mao spent the early years of the Revolution. Loving met with two of the soldiers Mao had assigned to escort her

This page, top: In July 1944, after being wounded in Saipan, Carlson was visited at the U.S. Naval Hospital in San Diego by First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt and her son, Col. James Roosevelt, who was Carlson's executive officer. Opposite, top: Carlson's son, Col. Evans C. Carlson, USMC, examines his father's Gung Ho knife and other possessions, discovered in 1960.



Color photos, clockwise from opposite left: In July 2002, Karen Loving met Ouyang Shanzen (left), one of her grandfather's guerrilla escorts, and Ling Qing, former Chinese ambassador to the United Nations and chair of the Friendship Association of the Peoples Republic of China; with Communist guerrillas and partisan fighters in Yuangang, Shanxi Province, August 2003; at home before leaving for China this fall; talking to former guerrillas and partisan fighters with the aid of interpreters, August 2003, Yuanshi, Hebei Province.

grandfather, and they talked about “how much they learned from him about how to be a soldier,” she says.

One of them, Ouyang Shanzen, who later became director of the Beijing Opera, gave Loving a copy of the diary he kept during his travels with Carlson.

“It’s fascinating because day to day, I can take my grandfather’s accounts of what happened on the trip and then I can take Ouyang’s and compare the two,” she says. “It really fleshes out what happened and what they were seeing.”

Loving’s professors were amazed at the sources she uncovered. “It’s incredible she could actually find some of these people in China,” Kiely says. “She’s done fantastic work.”

After a year of Chinese language study at Furman, Loving prepared for a second trip to China last August with financial help from the Furman Advantage Program and South Carolina Independent Colleges and Universities. In Kaup’s class, she studied textbooks by David Shambaugh, an expert on the Chinese military. She e-mailed him in Washington, and he agreed to meet with her.

Ten minutes into the interview, he asked, “Who are your contacts in China?”

“I told him, and he said, ‘We can do better.’ He picked up the phone and called the cultural liaison at the embassy for the People’s Republic of China and said, ‘I’d consider it a personal favor if you would help this lady.’ That’s the kind of help I’ve gotten.”

The second trip was primarily to meet with Chinese guerrilla veterans of the Sino-Japanese War, like the one who didn’t know America had fought the Japanese. But this time, with the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs alerted to her relationship to Carlson, Loving was treated like a celebrity.

“Every place we went — and we went to six different villages — I’d be met by the governor of the province and there’d be this motorcade waiting,” she says. “There’d be a receiving committee.”

The third trip will be this fall, when she uses Furman grants and scholarships and a Freeman-Asia grant to participate in the university’s Furman in China Program, which Kiely is directing. Loving hopes to take fellow students to Yen’an to interview more war veterans about her grandfather and to delve deeper into the birthplace of the Chinese Revolution.



“One of the big historical debates is, how did it happen?” she says. “How did Mao take these peasants who had for 2,000 years been subjugated, dominated, abused and concerned only for survival, and mobilize them into this force that forged a nation? What my grandfather saw was these people literally fighting with rocks and sticks . . . who were successfully fighting the most powerful war machine the world had ever seen, the Japanese army.

“He was able to see past the dirt and the poverty and lack of equipment and see the potential for a people who could forge a nation. He saw that in these Chinese peasants. And a lot of what he predicted came true.”

Loving hopes to gain enough knowledge from her Furman studies and subsequent graduate work — she hopes to attend the University of North Carolina — to be able to authoritatively place her grandfather in history. After that, she says, “I’d like to continue my grandfather’s work in China. I think he cared very deeply for these people and saw a lot of potential. I get the same feeling.

“Maybe it will be building better relationships between the United States and China, maybe educating children in the rural areas, maybe funding scholarships for Chinese students to come to Furman from these rural areas.”

And maybe bringing the harmonious spirit of Gung Ho to both nations her grandfather loved. 🍇



The author, formerly an award-winning reporter with The Greenville News, is pursuing a Master of Divinity degree at Erskine Theological Seminary.